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LG calls for...

On the grievance of one Ashok Kumar from Udhampur pertaining to protection of Water Spring near Railway Station, Udhampur, the Lt Governor directed the Deputy Commissioner, Udhampur to act promptly in this regard.

In response to the other issues and grievances raised during the programme pertaining to repair of roads and bridges, Civic facilities, water supply, power supply, and irrigation facilities, the Lt Governor set strict timelines for the redressal.

Rehana Batul Commissioner/Secretary, Public Grievances informed the chair about the progress and status of grievances received on Jammu and Kashmir Integrated Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (JK-IGRAMS).

Dr Arun Kumar Mehta, Chief Secretary; Atal Dulloo, Additional Chief Secretary Finance; Vivek Bhardwaj, Additional Chief Secretary, Health and Medical Education Department; Nitishwar Kumar, Principal Secretary to Lt Governor, Administrative Secretaries; ADGP Jammu; Divisional Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners, Superintendents of Police, Heads of the Departments, and other senior officers were present during the interaction, in person and through virtual mode.

Conclude J&K delimitation...

two parts and two Union territories would be carved out of it," Azad said.

Azad said usually, a Union Territory is made into a state, but perhaps for the first time, a state was downgraded into a Union Territory.

"It was like a DGP turned into a thanedar, a chief minister into just an MLA and a chief secretary into a patwari. No one would have thought something like this would happen. We thought no wise person would do such a thing and there was something messed up. It was untoward. I have talked a great deal about it over the last few years in Parliament," he said.

Describing the state of Jammu and Kashmir as it existed before August 5, 2019 as "our identity", the former Union minister asked people to be ready for the struggle to achieve full statehood.

"The state of Jammu and Kashmir is our identity. There were some things that Jammu and Kashmir had but the other parts of the country did not have. Those were our identity. We want our identity back and you have to remain ready for the struggle to achieve that. The first bullet will hit me, followed by these 10-20 people (Congress leaders) and then you."

"Till statehood is not restored like it was till August 4, 2019 and with the same Assembly, not the Union Territory Assembly, our struggle will go on even if we have to sacrifice our lives for that, because it is our identity," he said.

About the questions being raised over encounters conducted by the security forces, the Congress leader said the forces should take precautions in the civilian areas so that there are no civilian casualties.

He also appealed the politicians to visit the militancy-infested areas of the valley to encourage the people.

There is militancy in three districts of Kargil, Shopian and Pulwama. They have witnessed militancy earlier also. This meeting was organised here after three years to encourage them, to boost their morale and so that they do not think they have no one.

It is important that leaders should visit the areas where there is militancy. Whichever party they are, I will not go into it because the atmosphere in the state is not such that we talk against any party. I request all the political parties that rather than pointing fingers at other parties, they should try to create such an atmosphere in J-K so that people are assured that politics or elections can happen here, he said.

Azad said there is a need to create an atmosphere in the militancy-infested areas as people in such areas were worried and have become disappointed.

There is one type of disappointment here where as there is another type in Jammu, Katra or Udhampur, he said without elaborating further.

"There is poverty, the faces of the people are like as if they are in mourning, the light in their hearts has been extinguished. There is disappointment, unemployment, several restrictions, people cannot talk and if they raise their voice, they are sent to jail. How can humans be happy in such a situation?" he asked.

The workers' meeting was attended by several Congress leaders, including those who resigned from party posts recently while revolting against its Jammu and Kashmir unit leadership. However, Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC) president G A Mir was not present.

Will fight till...

Magray -- one of the four persons killed in the Hyderpora encounter of Srinagar on November 15. Magray's family claimed he was innocent and demanded immediate handing over of his body to them for performing last rites.

The NC leader had to trek around 5 km to reach the family's house.

"Today the situation has reached a stage where unfortunately we have to lodge protests for the bodies of innocent civilians. He (Magray) moved to Srinagar for work as he was unable to find a door for a job in his district.

"His father lives in police protection for fighting against militancy in this remote area. The family wants to perform his last rites which is being denied to them, he said and asked, was this the reason for the decisions forced on the people of Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019.

Training his gun on the leaders claiming to fight for the Jammu region, the NC leader questioned their silence on the plight of the family of Magray.

"Was not Gool part of Jammu province? Why are they not on the roads to seek the body of the youth? he said.

Demanding handing over of the body of the deceased to his family, Abdullah said this is grave injustice with a family which had all along fought and suffered to eradicate militancy from the region.

"They are claiming that there was no development in J&K before 2018 (when BJP and PDP came together after the fall of NC-Congress government).... I want to ask them what changed after you came to power and reorganised and downgraded the erstwhile state, the former chief minister said.

He asked the BJP to brief the people about the new development works initiated by its government, new water and electricity lines laid and power projects started.

"You (BJP) talked about giving freedom to the people of a few ruling families and taking the development to new heights. Every promise has proved a hoax as the situation has reached a stage where we have to knock every door for justice. The peace is nowhere to be seen, he said.

Continuing his tirade against the BJP, he said the promised industrialisation is nowhere and our unemployed youth are running from pillar to post to get a job as none from Ambani, Birla and Tata came here.

He also questioned different sets of rules for J&K and Ladakh and said while the land and jobs were reserved for the people of Ladakh, why the same was not done in Jammu and Kashmir.

The future of Ladakh youth is safe as the government has reserved jobs and land for them along with the state subject, while anyone can come and take our jobs, land, and scholarship. Why this discrimination with us? he asked.

Workshop on Mental wellness & drug de-addiction organised at District Jail Bhadarwah



A resource person educating jail inmates.

STATE TIMES NEWS

BHADARWAH: Promoting mental wellbeing of inmates, prison staff and to educate them to how to deal with stress beside motivating them to stay away from drug addiction, Jail authorities in collaboration with GMC Doda organised a day long workshop at District Jail Bhadarwah.

The workshop was primarily aimed at to educate the

inmates about the ill effects of narcotic drugs, beside how to deal with stress naturally without falling prey to any kind of addiction in difficult circumstances.

A team of doctors and Psychiatrist from GMC Doda led by Dr Ashraf Ali Khan, HOD Biochemistry Department interacted with 162 inmates lodged in District Jail Bhadarwah beside a visual slide show

depicting the ill effects of drug addiction, ways and means to come out of it and how to manage stress was also presented during the workshop.

Later a question answer session was also held to clear the doubts and answer the queries of the inmates by the concerned specialists.

Jail authorities expressed their gratitude to the Department for organizing such an awareness programme, which is the need of the hour and urged for conducting more such programmes in near future.

Superintendent District Jail Bhadarwah Mushtaq Malla said that the objective of the workshop is to motivate the inmates to never get tempted to fall prey to the drugs beside they were also educated to how to deal with stress.

India's total active cases down to 1,07,019, lowest in 541 days

STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: India saw a single-day rise of 8,318 new coronavirus infections taking the country's total tally of COVID-19 cases to 3,45,63,749, while the active cases have declined to 1,07,019, the lowest in 541 days, according to Union Health Ministry data updated on Saturday.

The death toll has climbed to 4,67,933 with 465 daily fatalities, according to the data updated at 8 am.

The daily rise in new coronavirus infections has been below 20,000 for 50 consecutive days and less than 50,000 daily new cases have been reported for 153 consecutive days now.

The active cases have declined to 1,07,019 comprising 0.31 per cent of the total infections, the lowest since March 2020, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate was recorded at 98.34 per cent, the highest since March 2020, the health ministry said. A decrease of 3,114 cases has been recorded in the active COVID-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours.

The daily positivity rate was recorded at 0.86 per cent. It has been less than 2 per cent for the last 54 days.

The weekly positivity rate was also recorded at 0.88 per cent. It has been below 1 per cent for the last 13 days, according to the health ministry.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 3,39,88,797, while the case fatality rate was recorded at 1.35 per cent. The cumulative doses administered in the country so far under the nationwide COVID-19 vaccination drive has exceeded 121.06 crore. India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 2020, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16.

Highlighting various reformative measures taken by the previous National Conference governments over the years for the upliftment of the people of J&K, he said land to the tiller was one of the biggest step taken by them but this government is out to snatch the land which was transferred to the people under the Roshni Act.

Today the situation is that a newspaper owner is frightened to report the truth in his paper. It is not like that he did not want to write the stories based on truth but he is not allowed to write as he will face cuts in government advertisement, he said. He said the situation is very tough as anyone raising his voice against the injustice is being dubbed as anti-national.

Abdullah said he has not come to seek votes to win elections but has come to caution the people against the conspiracies being hatched by New Delhi to divide the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Delhi is creating various parties and their only aim is to divide the votes of Kashmiris, Chenab Valley and Pir Panchal regions. We have to remain alert and frustrate their designs, he said.

Govt to introduce...

March to Parliament on Monday.

"To enable the farmers to sell their produce at higher prices and benefit from technological improvements, farmers have been provided access to agriculture markets which will help them increase their income. With this objective three farm laws... were enacted, as a part of the government's endeavour to improve the condition of farmers including small and marginal farmers," the bill to repeal three farm laws states.

It also says that even though "only a group of farmers are protesting against these laws, the government has tried hard to sensitise the farmers on the importance of the farm laws and explain the merits through several meetings and other forums".

Without taking away the existing mechanisms available to farmers, new avenues were provided for trade of their produce, the proposed legislation states.

COVID: 149 fresh...

territory, while the number of recovered patients is 3,30,189, the officials said.

The COVID-19 death toll in the union territory is 4,473, as three fresh deaths were reported in the past 24 hours.

Meanwhile, the officials said, there were 49 confirmed cases of Mucormycosis (black fungus) in the union territory as no fresh case was reported since last evening.

Meanwhile, thirty-two more people have tested positive for COVID-19 in Ladakh, taking the overall virus tally in the union territory to 21,467, officials said.

The count of active cases stands at 243 224 in Leh and 19 in Kargil.

Ladakh has registered 213 Covid-related deaths -- 155 in Leh and 58 in Kargil -- since the outbreak of the pandemic last year, the officials said.

They said 2,485 people were tested for COVID-19 in the twin districts on Friday, and 32 of them were found to have contracted the disease.

The officials said 24 more coronavirus patients were discharged from a hospital in Leh, thereby taking the number of recoveries in Ladakh to 21,011, which is 97.87 per cent of the caseload.

New COVID variant...

scientists say has a high number of mutations, was first detected in South Africa last week. A World Health Organisation (WHO) panel has classified it as a highly transmissible variant of concern, the same category that includes the Delta variant.

During the meeting which lasted for about two hours, Prime Minister Modi spoke about the need to be proactive in the light of the new variant and urged people to be more cautious and take proper precautions like masking up and maintaining social distance, the PMO statement said. The WHO also asserted that at no cost should "we let our guard down."

Modi asked "officials to review plans for easing of international travel restrictions in light of the emerging new evidence", the statement said, even as Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal urged the prime minister to stop flights coming to India from those countries which are affected by the new variant.

The prime minister's directive to officials came a day after the Civil Aviation Ministry announced the resumption of scheduled international flights to and from India from December 15 after 20 months of coronavirus-induced suspension.

India's decision to resume scheduled international passenger flights also came at a time when various countries such as the UK, Germany, Singapore, Israel, France and Italy have restricted air travel from southern Africa where the cases of new coronavirus variant with serious health implications have been reported.

In a tweet after the meeting, Modi said, "reviewed the COVID-19 and vaccination-related situation. In light of the new variant, we remain vigilant, with a focus on containment and ensuring increased second dose coverage."

During the meeting, the prime minister was also given an overview of the sequencing efforts in the country and the variants circulating in the country, the PMO statement said.

Modi directed that genome sequencing samples be collected from international travellers and community as per norms, tested through the network of labs already established under the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) and early warning signals identified for COVID-19 management, the statement said.

Prime Minister Modi also spoke about the need to increase the sequencing efforts and make it more broad-based.

Bengaluru Rural Deputy Commissioner K Srinivas, under whose jurisdiction Kempegowda International Airport comes, told reporters that from (November) 1 to 26 a total of 94 people have come from South Africa and out of them two have tested positive for COVID-19.

Both the infected persons have been quarantined, are being monitored by authorities and their samples sent for further tests to ascertain the variant, he said.

The WHO asked countries in the southeast Asia region to scale up surveillance, strengthen public health and social measures, and enhance vaccination coverage.

The global health body said festivities and celebrations must include all precautionary measures and crowds and large gatherings must be avoided.

"At no cost should we let our guard down," said Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director, WHO, South-East Asia Region, adding that countries must enhance surveillance and sequencing.

Based on updated information on circulating variants and response capacities, countries should assess the risk of importation through international travel and take measures accordingly, she said.

In a tweet, Chief Minister Kejriwal emphasised that the country had "recovered" from the COVID-19 pandemic with "great difficulty".

"I urge Hon'ble PM to stop flights from those countries which are affected by new variant. With great difficulty, our country has recovered from Corona. We shud do everything possible to prevent this new variant from entering India," Kejriwal tweeted.

Meanwhile, as much as 64 per cent of respondents in a survey conducted over the decision to allow scheduled international operations to and from India want the government to reconsider it in the wake of the emergence of the new coronavirus variant.

The survey was carried out by the online platform LocalCircles immediately after

the government announced the resumption of scheduled international flight services, which remain suspended since March 2020 due to the pandemic.

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi also expressed concern over the emergence of the new coronavirus variant and asked the government to provide vaccine security to the people of the country.

The Union Health Ministry on Friday said the countries in Europe, including the United Kingdom, and South Africa, Brazil, Bangladesh, Botswana, China, Mauritius, New Zealand, Zimbabwe, Singapore, Hong Kong and Israel have been put in the 'at-risk' category.

KERALA: The state government said authorities are vigilant but as of now there is no cause for concern in the state.

Health Minister Veena George said the state has taken all precautionary steps as per the guidelines of the Centre and surveillance would be strengthened at all airports.

KARNATAKA: Guidelines given to airports that those travelling from countries at 'high risk' category to the state have to undergo a test despite having a COVID test report, and they will be allowed outside the airport only after testing negative, said Health Minister K Sudhakar.

Even after testing negative they will have to remain at home and after seven days they will have to undergo a test once again, and after getting a negative report, one can go out, he added.

GUJARAT: Passengers from countries categorized as 'at risk' by the Union Health Ministry will have to undergo COVID-19 tests upon arrival if they are not fully vaccinated, an official said in Ahmedabad.

Those who are fully vaccinated will also be screened at the airport and allowed to proceed if they do not show any symptoms of the infection, he said.

TAMIL NADU: The state has intensified precautionary measures at all the four international airports and appointed four health department officials to personally monitor the situation, State Minister Ma Subramanian said.

These officials would be stationed at Chennai, Coimbatore, Madurai and Tiruchirappalli airports.

MADHYA PRADESH: